



Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum Opening 2019

Stewart Indian School in Carson City, Nevada, was operated by the federal government for 90 years, from 1890-1980. During that time it underwent many changes at the federal level, as well as at the local level. And thousands of students, their families, and communities were affected.

Allotment, Assimilation, and Boarding Schools The federal government set up boarding schools to educate Native American children in the late 1800s. This forced assimilation policy was part of treaty rights, but in reality justified dividing up Native land through allotment and intended to assimilate Indian children into dominant culture. Boarding schools offered basic academics but emphasized patriotism, citizenship, and manual labor skills. These government policies strictly forbade the students from practicing their traditions or speaking their languages, they had no contact with families, and aspects of their lives were severely controlled. They were cut off from their families, culture, and languages. The federal government closed the school in 1980 and the State of Nevada took over the property, housing state agencies on the 110 acres.

Nevada State Funding In 2019 the Nevada Governor and Legislature appropriated state funding to create the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum and Welcome Center to interpret this 90 years of history. This new museum will open in December 2019 and is dedicated to the memories of the first Stewart students from Great Basin tribes in 1890, and all students and their families who were impacted by the Stewart experience. A grand opening of the museum will be held in May of 2020.

Museum Exhibits Walking into the lobby of the museum, visitors will be able to explore the Native land Stewart occupies, as well as to imagine the way the land looked before Stewart was established. The storytelling room will feature an exhibit about the four main language groups of Nevada: Waši-šiw (Washoe); Numu (Northern Paiute); Nuwu or Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute); and Newe (Western Shoshone). Among these four groups are 27 federally recognized tribes. This room will be used for storytelling by tribal members of these tribal nations, as well as craft demonstrations and sharing of documentaries about Nevada's tribes. The museum's hallway will feature changing exhibits sharing class photos from the graduating classes at Stewart, as well as student art produced when the school was open. The Research Room will feature archival documents, photographs, and publications about Stewart as well as boarding school history for the public and alumni to access. In addition, the Research Room will have an exhibit about the work of Superintendent Frederick Snyder and his efforts to beautify the

Stewart campus in the 1920s with hand crafted stone buildings and landscaping. A temporary gallery will feature the work of contemporary Great Basin Native artists.

Our Home, Our Relations Exhibit The main exhibit gallery is a permanent exhibit about Stewart's 90-year history and all the changes it went through. The exhibit explains federal allotment and assimilation policies and the creation of Stewart as a federally operated off-reservation boarding school. This exhibit tells the stories of the students who attended Stewart through their own words. The following is a description of the exhibits:

- In "Coming to Stewart" the students describe the many reasons they attended Stewart from forced kidnapping to wanting an education.
- The exhibit moves into a visual and textual timeline about the changes Stewart underwent and the main events and important parts of the school's history, both administratively and personally.
- The "Daily Life" exhibit demonstrates what the school was like on a daily basis for the students with stories about schedules, curricula, living in the dormitories, marching to classes, and learning vocational skills.
- The "Shadow of Stewart" documents the sad history of the students who were forced to go to the school, those who ran away and were punished, as well as those who fell ill from contagious diseases and passed away at the school. It also demonstrates how the school impacted the students and their families emotionally and psychologically and how that trauma is carried over to their descendants today (intergenerational trauma).
- The "Making Home" section talks about how the students survived by making the school their second home: helping the younger ones, making life-long friendships, and joining clubs, band, and athletics to create their own communities.
- "Stewart in Transition" talks about the many changes Stewart went through, as the school's focus changed from the reforms of the 1930s, to the Navajo Program in the 1940-50s, to the resistance and American Indian Movement during the 1960s through to the 1970s and the closing of the school in 1980.
- The "Voices of Stewart" demonstrates the many languages of Stewart's tribes as the student body changed from the early Great Basin tribes, to the tribes from many tribes in the West. This is an auditory experience to illustrate how tribes are revitalizing their languages.
- And, "Stewart Today" talks about the amazing lives the alumni led after leaving Stewart, from representing their tribes in the state legislature or tribal councils, to careers in everything from art, to business, to health and everything in between.

The compelling history of Stewart will also be shared in educational activities, lectures, programs, and conferences as well as a Volunteer, Docent, and Intern Program. For more information, contact Bobbi Rahder, Museum Director, at brahder@nic.nv.gov or 775-687-7606, or visit the website at www.StewartIndianSchool.com.